

THE CONFEDERATE.

WEDNESDAY, February 9, 1864.

Previous to the 26th of May, 1861, there was much diversity of sentiment among the people of this State on the proper action to be taken. The three national parties, the success of either of which in the Presidential election would have postponed the necessity of secession, had been defeated. The North had been swallowed up in one fatal sectional or partisan passion bent on the destruction of constitutional rights, and the gradual subjection of the minority to its power and hebet. The election of Lincoln consummated the success of this hostile and destructive influence. The foresight of some discerned immediately the awful and imperative obligation of withdrawing from this fatal power and influence. Others, after a short postponement, adopted with some reluctance the inevitable necessity; and others still, with a faint yearning towards the ancient institutions, refused to let them go. Since then, and honest effort was made by good and sincere men, in the Peace Congress at Washington, to avert the final doom. But with all this effort, the faithful act of James Buchanan—the removal of Major Anderson to Fort Sumter—and the proclamation of Lincoln, all which had been the unseen but inexorable logic of events, brought up the crisis. The demand by Lincoln for North Carolina troops to fight Southern men on Southern soil, was responded to by Governor Ellis with a memorable refusal; and public sentiment rallied to a seemingly and apparently serene unanimity. On the 20th of May—the glorious anniversary of an ancient and cherished liberty—the Convention of the State, without division, by a unanimous vote, to which was added for further and more binding pledge the solemn inscription of each individual name—on a parchment paper, but of enduring parchment, for then and thereafter to be a memorial of the common obligation—the ordinance of secession from the Federal Union, and adopted the Constitution of the Confederate States.

This inspiring ceremony was enhanced by the unanimity of the great names which adorned its performance. There sat the venerable Chief Justice, the venerable President of the State, and the equal of any conqueror on the continent as an exponent of the common law. By his side was Ler R. Butler, whose name was as a legend and an advocate—the notes of whose immortal mind as powerful as still echo in the ears of those who have heard him. There sat also the distinguished and venerable men of the State, the representatives of the people, the men of the State, giving their sanction and lending their countenance to this great act of deliverance.

There were the daughters of North Carolina, fair and beautiful—leading their approval by enthusiastic participation. "The organ of public opinion," whose voice was also one of the signs, expressed it in the public records as a glorious celebration of independence, a long and wisely performed—and for himself and his associates, he faithfully promised that the act should be made good "with a last dollar and the last man."

This is authentic history of secession in North Carolina. This is a faithful narrative of the great act of deliverance, when the people of this State, in the face of all opposition, and in the face of all danger, have chosen to stand by their principles, and to defend their rights, and to defend their country.

Then was the voice of party hushed. With generous inclination to take the full measure of responsibility, the standard of honor, that those who had been "ultra secessionists" had not made the revolution, but that the "Union men" had made it; the "Union men" were not permitted to say that the old Union men gave the word.

Thereafter the Standard became the organ of the war—the defender of the Administration—the champion of its virtues and its aims, and the special enforcer of Mr. Davis. Under its patriotic teachings, animosities were fostered. When it said that "no negotiation could come from us," all acquiesced. When it intimated that "the South cannot make overtures, for she is fighting for existence, and may offer on her part to treat would be considered a sign of weakness and fear," and its influential logic it became the received opinion, and her citizens reported in the adulation of sentiment, "that so long as there is a single enemy on her soil, just so long will she fight"—that, "if she were to offer less to her enemies, she would be unworthy of the spirit and character of her people." These sentiments, transcribed from the Standard of 18th of August, 1861, became enduring convictions in the loyal hearts of the people—and by them faithfully engraved with the bayonets upon the forehead of our foes.

Could it have been anticipated that the author of these noble sentiments—the tutor of these patriotic doctrines—would in two short years forsake all his own teachings—abandon official pledges—retract his outspoken praise, and substitute therefor censure, abuse, vituperation, discord for harmony; disagreement for cheer; impracticable and impossible negotiation for victory; submission for contest, and for hope despair? Alas, that we are called to wonder at such strange and wayward inconsistency. We ask ourselves in amazement, for the influence that has wrought this change.

The Progress in noticing the appearance of the North Carolina at Fayetteville, says: "A newspaper that will reflect the sentiments of the people of that section is much needed in Fayetteville, and we congratulate them in their good fortune and urge them to sustain the enterprise."

Do not the Fayetteville Observer and N. C. Presbyterian "reflect the sentiments of the people" of that town and section? What say the people of Fayetteville to the insinuation that they do not? They are true to the South and the State. Is the Carolinian to reflect opposite sentiments? What says the Carolinian?

and, and before it is too late, it may return to the principles it set out with. If it should, those who do not desire to cherish ill will, will rejoice at its escape. But if it remain inaccessible to reason, to equity, to deserved reproach, yet unwillingly bestowed, there is but one fate—the isolation—inevitable to those whom the public, pressed with dangers, is obliged to regard as an enemy.

Important Enquiry.
Since the public have understood that we are connected with the press, numerous enquiries pour in upon us, of what the Government will do with regard to the agitation of the Convention question now on foot in the State. We do not pretend to be informed of the purposes of either Government. That at Richmond has, we believe, no organ, and we do not know if Gov. Vance has, nor is it likely that either would commit to outsiders the policy it intends to pursue. But we are willing to give our individual opinion, for the benefit of all concerned.

The movement of the agitators is full of peril. The artful guise in which it is covered is as thin as gauze. The Government is not deaf to the warnings uttered, nor blind to the threatening aspect of affairs. The effort to conceal, will not hide the purpose of the agitators. It is known that they mean revolution. If they can drift over the dangerous rapids of the preliminary into the smooth waters of a Convention, they hope, under the form of a recognized authority, to consummate the secession of North Carolina from the Confederacy, and the purchase of a peace from Lincoln, by the sacrifice of the other States—by the violation of faith and honor, and by submission. Their fierce denunciation of our Government—their legislation to thwart its policy—the refusal of legislation to aid and assist it—the judicial "habeas corpus" in the facility for discharges from the military service—the threats of defiance and of repeated—not of remedy, legitimate and rightful, but of force and revolution, and following all this is the movement begun by which alone revolution can be accomplished—the taking of the water wheels. All this tells the tale—but like the veiled Prophet of Khamsan, the visage is not hid and the deformities are apparent. What will the Government do? Will it let the movement run to completion? No. It will not surrender the Confederacy, consign our rulers, our military leaders, our chief men to sure destruction—our army to a mortifying abasement—our flag to dishonor—our property to confiscation—our wives and daughters to servitude and ignominy—our homes to desolation and ourselves to a degrading servitude under the brutal rule of Yankee meanness, mixed with impudent audacity, if the Government will suffer these things, then this agitation will be left alone, to pursue its course.

But if President Davis, and Governor Vance, and our Congress, and Lee, and Johnston, and Beauregard, and our military officers and soldiers have a stake, and they feel it, upon our success, then agitation will be obliged to stop. How? It may readily be perceived, how that difficulty may exist as to which Government should move first—whether one assumes to act alone or both in concert—whether it were better to crush the geyser or let them hatch, that the nature of the brood may be discovered—that the goose, and other harmless fowl may be separated from the vultures.

These difficulties, however, will not be a long settlement; and our opinion is, that the arm that has for long been stayed in forbearance, is about to fall. When it does fall, its hand will grasp the leaders in an iron clutch tighter than a vice. No matter whether they be found within the bar, or presiding on the bench, or sitting among the confederates in the Sanhedrin of agitation. If martial law be established in North Carolina—if the habeas corpus be suspended—if a military force be placed in our midst—if the leading agitators be arrested and punished, some by death, others by banishment, others by forced enlistment into the front of our service—if the necessary inconveniences of this kind of rule be obliged to be substituted for the mild sway of the civil law, the responsibility will be on the head of agitators who teach that "our Government is a despotism" to be resisted—that "forbearance towards it is no longer a virtue"—that North Carolina is "the key-stone to be withdrawn from its arch," that the "arch may tumble."—The responsibility will be on those officials who are suspected of undue sympathy with skulkers and deserters and who place impediments in the way of the service by imposing unnecessary restraints upon its officers.

Towards these responsible agitators the public opinion will be directed justly and properly, and upon them will the hand of Government be necessarily laid.

No protection can be taken under the shield of free speech and press. The freedom of speech and press do not comport with that devilish license which in time of war hazards the National existence.

We learn that among the Yankee prisoners taken below Kinston last week, there were forty-five deserters from Northern troops. They were in full Yankee uniform, and will of course suffer the penalty so eminently due the base crime of desertion to the enemy. One deserter from the 8th Regiment caught in Yankee uniform, was shot on Thursday last, with several others.

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From North Georgia.—On the afternoon of the 28th, it is stated, the enemy advanced with two brigades of cavalry and one of infantry, and drove in our pickets, pressing Kelly's brigade of cavalry back from Ringgold to within two and a half miles of Tunnel Hill. At night the enemy was driven back to Ringgold. Our loss was two killed and four wounded; that of the enemy considerable. This movement is supposed to have been a reconnaissance in force.

Mr. Reade's Speech.
We recur to Mr. Reade's speech again, because it is deserving of a more extended notice. We are still of opinion, that the resolution of thanks came very inappropriately from Mr. Reade, if it be true that he is one of the leaders of the Convention movement. But the speech itself is obnoxious to censure. It was a fine occasion for Mr. Reade to have done justice to the State—to have paid the right compliment to her soldiers in the true tone, and have reflected honor on himself. It was his own fault that he contented himself with excusing petty complaints, and insinuating a defence of a broader defection. When Mr. Reade uttered the broad statement that "it is spirit that moves an army and makes it irresistible," we imagine his embarrassment at the additional reflection, that spirit is engendered and kept alive by a warm-hearted display of home encouragement, and is soon broken when that encouragement is withheld, and that how little he and his associates had contributed of this comforting and animating influence.

It was hardly fair in Mr. Reade to connect the soldier in any wise with the rumors of disloyalty in North Carolina. These rumors grow out of no action of theirs, nor do they touch the State at large. In the language of a contemporary in another State, "a broad line of distinction is taken between the good and the bad—the true and the false—and it is well remembered that the majority of hearts in the State beat true to the cause."

Mr. Reade well knew those who are designated in these suspicions, and he has had it in his power to have done much towards effacing them. The little he had done previously, is not much enhanced by his Senatorial effort.

Mr. Reade urges three causes of excuse for the dissatisfaction in the State, as he is pleased to call it. 1st. That early in the war the arms of the people were demanded—that this made the impression, not unreasonably, that the purpose was to disarm her because she was suspected. 2d. This will be news in North Carolina, when thirty-seven thousand stand of arms was lavished at one time from our captured arsenal. The people of North Carolina were well informed enough to know, that early in the war the Confederate Government needed all kinds of arms, and made no call on her that was not made on other States. A fitting answer to this accusation, is the resolutions passed unanimously in November, 1862, by the Legislature—yielding "full confidence in the ability and patriotism of President Davis;" and that other resolution of Mr. Grissom, one of Mr. Reade's peculiar friends, in which was pledged the full support of the State to the "struggle, till the entire independence of the Confederate States is secured." If that pledge had been redeemed by Mr. Reade's associates, his speech could never have been made.

The second accusation against the Government is, that the Judiciary of the State has not been respected. It is as sad as true, that many of the best men in North Carolina had in diminished respect that portion of a Judiciary whose facile disposition towards the unworthy deserter has kept pace with an annoying and injurious hindrance of the faithful officer in the discharge of his duty. But no accuser can cite instances where the Government has slighted the Judiciary decisions of North Carolina when they came to be known—nor an instance where intentional wrong has been perpetrated on one of her citizens. The tendency of the Government should have dismissed these accusations, if it inspired no gratitude.

If suspicion, distrust and threat, on the part of the authorities "chafe" the State, in what degree does Mr. Reade think the Government is "chafed," when all the "suspicions, distrust and threats" have originated in North Carolina; and been heaped on it, and are now daily being heaped in the most flagrant and insolent manner? Mr. Reade professes to know nothing of the movement for a Convention except what is before the public. If this is candid, rumor has done him injustice; for it ascribes to him the defence of this movement in the caucus referred to. Of its danger, Mr. Reade cannot be ignorant; and an enlightened Senator in his place might have well, seeing that the public enemy is building much hope upon this movement, have raised his voice to avert the evil. But Mr. Reade, in comparing it to the glorious convention of revolutionary record, does not exalt the former, but levels the latter. There is no point of comparison between the two. The one was prompted by noble and elevated sentiment;—the other is the offspring, at best, of low discontent. The one moved in support of the contest for independence;—the other stifles it. The one gave assurance to the enemy of firm and obstinate resistance;—the other speaks in whining terms of olive branches and negotiation. The one enrolled upon its records the loyal and true patriots;—the other inscribes the names of deluded people led by political agitators. The one observed fidelity to the allies;—the other threatens desertion. The one bore the State to honor; the other carries it to infamy. In every feature they are dissimilar, and there is no point of analogy.

If Mr. Reade's speech is a jest, it was ill-timed; if in earnest, then the only excuse for it is to be found in the fact, that Mr. Reade has resided in the town of Roxboro', remote from the incidents of war and out of reach of intelligence of the leading features. On the bench Mr. Reade will occupy a more fitting position. A gentleman of great propriety of character, patient and dignified, of impartial mind and of sound legal intelligence, he will adorn the judicial eminence; and more so, as settled in the far West, he will not be much brought in contact with these questions which involve the political prejudices to interfere with the judicial judgment.

The Telegraph is completed between Raleigh and Fayetteville, and messages passed over the wires for the first time last evening. We congratulate the old town on again being brought into communication with the telegraphic world.

WRT ADAMS AT WORK.—It is reported that Gen. Wrt Adams captured on the 23d inst., at Seltsertown, near Natchez, thirty-five prisoners and six wagons and teams loaded with cotton going to Natchez, and about eighty negroes.

LT. PERKINS, of the 31st N. C. Regiment, was killed in the recent fight at Smithfield, Va. His remains have been brought home for interment.

North Carolina News.
We find in the Richmond papers of Friday last, the following official despatches: WILKINSON, February 4.

To General S. Cooper.
On the 22d instant, Gen. Martin, with the 4th and 24th, and Col Jackson's command from Kinston, broke the railroad at Shepherdsville, driving the enemy from their works at Newport Barracks and across Newport river. W. H. C. WHITING, Major General.

The following official despatch from Commander Wood, gives the particulars of the destruction of the gunboat mentioned in the despatch of Gen. Pickett: KINSTON, Feb. 4, 1864.

Hon. S. R. Mallory.
The force under my command boarded and captured last night the United States gunboat, the Underwriter, four guns, and ninety men and officers. Her position was within musket range of several strong works; one of which was raking the vessel during the time we had possession, and her not having steps up caused me to burn her. Our loss is twenty killed and wounded, and four missing; the enemy's unknown. J. TAYLOR WOOD.

The following letter from Maj. Gen. Rodas, is addressed to Brig. Gens. Ramseur and Johnston: **Brig. Gens. Ramseur and Johnston:**
Generals—It is my pride to have been associated with your two brigades, as comrades or as commander, from the bloody field of Williamsburg, through all the trials of this arduous war, up to the present moment. I claim, in both capacities, the privilege of offering my warmest and most enduring affection. May it prove superior to domestic faction and to present hardships, they have stepped forward, almost to a man, as the pioneers of re-enlistment for your State. The name of North Carolina, impressed on the heart of the people amidst the fire and blood of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg by your respective commands, has been indelibly engraved this day, by a victory over self, more nobly and more enduring. May it prove the seed of a fruitful harvest striking terror abroad, bringing peace and concord at home. [Signed] R. E. RODES, Major General.

From the Richmond Examiner of Saturday.
THE WAR NEWS.—Advices received yesterday from North Carolina were very sanguine of the prospects of the Confederate cause. The report yesterday was that our troops had obtained possession of the entire line of fortifications.

Newbern is the key to a large and productive country, in which, even now, vast amounts of provisions are contained. It is also reported to be the rendezvous of a large number of fugitive slaves, and the most important depot of supplies, with the exception of the army in Eastern North Carolina.

We are sorry to dash the reports which were so freely circulated yesterday of a success at Newbern. There is no doubt that a despatch was received yesterday by the Government that General Pickett had found it necessary to fall back to Kinston, and was then performing that movement.

The report, when we copied in our columns yesterday, of the capture of the railroad, is understood to have been intended to prevent reinforcements reaching the garrison at Newbern. But whatever may have been the result of the affair, we are left to conclude that General Pickett found the enemy's works at Newbern too strong to carry by assault, and he retired to Kinston, leaving a detachment with artillery and cavalry to march, having turned out to be a successful foraging expedition.

The defenses of Newbern are certainly of the most formidable description, and from what we can learn, are well calculated to withstand the perils of any assault. The town is situated between two rivers, and the strip of land, not more than a mile wide is said to be traversed by a deep ditch, twenty feet wide, with a gunboat anchored at each of its extremities.

THE CURRENCY BILL.—We are well assured that the Confederate Senate has passed the currency bill in secret session, and that what is known as Oldham's plan—a tax on the currency—is rejected. The House bill was adopted, and we are inclined to believe that the ground of compromise between the two Houses will be the constitution of a new currency limited to two hundred millions of dollars, and sustained either by a pledge of cotton, or a special appropriation of future revenues. The fact is, Congress has rejected the currency, and before the bill is passed, they designed to reject it. It is not unlikely the session may expire.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE SOUTHWEST.—We learn that despatches were received here yesterday, from General Polk, at Meridian, Mississippi, referring to a contemplated movement of the enemy from Yazoo City. It is supposed to be the design of the enemy to beset the State of Mississippi and when the breach which the river makes between the two portions of the Confederacy. We suggested, some days ago, that Sherman's design were never directed to Mobile or Texas, as generally supposed, but were aimed at General Polk's lines; and the recent despatches confirm this supposition.

MORE OF THE GALLANT AFFAIR AT SMITHFIELD.—As the smoke clears away, and the excitement subsides, the gallant affair at Smithfield, we begin to get minute and reliable details of the gallant affair at Smithfield last Monday. An eye witness of the fight, called upon yesterday, and placed us in possession of such information as enables us to award the praise due to the gallant North Carolinians who participated. They consisted of companies E, I and C, of the 31st North Carolina, and were commanded by Capt. Isaac Pipkin, of Morris County, Hertford county. These companies left camp at Smithfield at about three o'clock on Monday morning, and made a forced march to Smithfield, a distance of fourteen miles, by 11 A. M. Although much fatigued and fatigued, they marched into the fight with an alacrity worthy of fresh troops. As soon as the South Bryans neared the wharf, Captain Pipkin ordered his men to within thirty yards of the boat, and commanded them to allow no Yankee to take the wheel, or man the guns. The order was promptly obeyed, and the helmsman, a tall fellow of dark complexion, no sooner attempted to turn the boat around, than he was shot down. Several then made an effort to man the guns, but instantly shared the fate of the pilot. In fact, no Yankee showed his head, who was not speedily greeted with a miniature ball. In the meantime, Sturdivant's Battery of two guns was engaged, and the enemy's boats were driven to within thirty yards of the boat, and commanded them to allow no Yankee to take the wheel, or man the guns. The order was promptly obeyed, and the helmsman, a tall fellow of dark complexion, no sooner attempted to turn the boat around, than he was shot down. Several then made an effort to man the guns, but instantly shared the fate of the pilot. 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